

*How I Learned to Start the Conversation*

**An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)**

**by**

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Signed



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## Abstract

*How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel, written in 1997, discusses a topic that no one really wants to talk about: Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). Yet the play is widely read and largely beloved because of the way it combines the seriousness of CSA with tasteful and appropriate humor. This project's aim was to introduce the topic of CSA to an audience of Vogel's play and to begin a dialogue with the audience about CSA.

## Acknowledgements

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# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>An Introduction to Child Sexual Abuse .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A short story .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>My solution.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The Directing Journal.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Pre Auditions .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Auditions &amp; The Cast.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The read-through .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>The rehearsals.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Reflection/Artist Statement.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>42</b>

## **An Introduction to Child Sexual Abuse**

“Sometimes to tell a secret, you first have to teach a lesson” (Vogel 9). So begins Paula Vogel’s play, *How I Learned to Drive*. In order to teach a lesson, you first have to start the conversation, but to do that can be a challenge when the topic is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is defined by Prevent Child Abuse as “inappropriately exposing or subjecting [a] child to sexual contact, activity, or behavior” (Prevent Child Abuse America), and is nothing new in the course of human history. The ancient Greek soldiers would regularly molest the boys they were training; young girls have been bought, sold, and traded since before anyone can remember; and today 1 in every 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys will be sexually abused before age 18 (The National Center for Victims of Crime; Prevent Child Abuse America). That last fact is suspected to be low because boys underreport their abuse.

With so many people affected, it seems absurd that there isn’t a huge international effort to stifle CSA. It is sensationalized in news stories. In prison, child abusers are the targets of the most violence by their fellow inmates (Truelove). And yet, tens of thousands of children become new victims every year (Prevent Child Abuse America).

These children may grow up to become victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), which is similar to domestic violence but is not necessarily between two people cohabitating. For example, a teenager can be a victim of IPV with both partners living in separate homes with their own respective parents. IPV can be sexual, physical, or emotional. When a child abuse victim grows up to be a victim, this is known as revictimization (Murphy). Studies differ *greatly* on how common this is, but most show some correlation (Renner and Slack).

CSA victims may also grow up to commit the act forced upon them. This is highly debated in research, but the correlation seems to be there: looking among the abusers for whom



has been abused, rather than among the victims to see who grows up to become an abuser. One study even found that adult CSA victims were more likely to be afraid of committing the abuse themselves and are overly cautious in their adult lives (Futa).

Fear and shame were the commonalities in most of the research I found. Abuse victims learn fear and shame not only from abusers but from society. Fear of failure, fear of being unlovable, fear of dark, fear of storms, and fear of being found out. The fear stems from the shame. Because we adults are so afraid to talk about sexuality with children, they inherit a sense of shame of being sexual. The shame is not just limited to children. We are taught that sex before marriage or sex without love or sex without commitment are shameful things. Even being desirous of sexual contact is a shameful thing. In this sort of climate, it is no wonder that children would feel ashamed of admitting to their parents or their teachers of having been involved in anything of a sexual nature—regardless of their willingness to participate.

Abusers take advantage of the shame to keep their victims silent (Prevent Child Abuse America). The victim fears punishment if the abuse is revealed. The victim feels guilty for not preventing the abuse themselves. The fear and shame of the victim places the responsibility for the abuse entirely on the victim.

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### **A short story**

There was once a little girl, a happy little girl, who had two wonderful parents who loved her very much. Her father was beginning a successful career as a pediatrician, and her mother as a politician and public advocate. They lived in a small town. At the age of four, the little girl loved to read books and play make-believe. She was proud to be a big sister and “help” her mother care for her baby brother. Her favorite daycare activity was the French/music class.

Across the street lived a young boy named Jason. Jason was about 13 years old. He liked scary movies and knew how to blow bubblegum bubbles and tie his shoes in a bow. The little girl liked playing with Jason and looked up to him. The girl's parents had known Jason and his parents for a couple of years now and felt comfortable paying the boy to watch their children.

One of the games the little girl was accustomed to playing with her father was "doctor." She would make-believe an accident and need medical attention from her father who would show her how to dress her imaginary wounds. Her parents got her a play first-aid kit, complete with plastic stethoscope, thermometer, and inflatable blood pressure taker. It was this game that she suggested to her new babysitter, but somehow it became a very different version of the game.

Jason would close the curtains whenever *they* played "doctor" because it involved the little girl, as the kid, taking off her clothes for the make-believe check-up from him, as the doctor. The little girl would sometimes suggest this game herself, understanding that it was a routine when he came to babysit. Somewhere along the way, he must have explained to the little girl that this was a secret game.

She was five years old when Jason babysat her for the last time. She wanted a turn as the doctor. Jason refused. The little girl was accustomed to being the boss on the playground at daycare and disliked not being in charge. They played the game again, but the little girl was a reluctant patient. She suggested involving her baby brother, having been taught by her parents that she supposed to include him in games. Jason didn't seem interested in playing the game with the baby, which the little girl liked. She would have been jealous if he wanted to play with her brother more than her.

The next few times the little girl's mother looked for a babysitter, the little girl would suggest her other favorites—not Jason. She didn't know why, but she didn't want Jason. One

day, none of her favorites were available. When her mother suggested Jason, the little girl groaned.

“I thought you liked Jason,” her mother said.

“I do,” the little girl responded. “He just always wants to play this game I don’t like.”

“What game is that?” her mother asked, keeping her tone as even as she could.

“Doctor.”

“How does that game go?” The little girl was surprised her mother didn’t know.

Eventually, the little girl realized that her mother was feigning the unconcern she displayed. It was too late for the little girl to take back the answer that was already spilling from her lips:

“It’s a game where Jason gets to be like Daddy and I’m the kid...and I have my underwear on.” The little girl was lying about the last part. She cursed herself (inasmuch as a five-year-old can) for saying this part wrongly. She had meant to say, ‘with her pants off’ because—of course her underwear was supposed to be *on*, under her pants. She was sure her mother would know that she had, in fact, been taking *off* her underwear for the game. The little girl also worried that she had forgotten that this game was a secret, but she couldn’t distinctly remember having been told this.

The two families had a meeting to discuss the game. Jason admitted that they *had* played the game, but that it had often been requested by the little girl. This was true, but the game should not have involved nudity. His job was to be the babysitter. In the end, however, he agreed when the little girl told him, “I don’t want to play that game anymore.”

I was never left alone with Jason again. I did suggest him as a babysitter when my mom was having a hard time finding one once:

“I thought that Jason played that game you didn’t like,” my mother said. I knew she was tense. But it didn’t seem like an issue to me. We didn’t have to play that game. Maybe she was saying we *would* have to if he babysat me...

“Well, I don’t mind it very much,” I said, “and we wouldn’t have to—”

“Oh my God! He is not babysitting you!” She was freaking out.

“Mom, I was *saying*—we wouldn’t have to play that game.” It didn’t seem like a big deal to me. I was only five, and I’d already started to forget that this game had ever existed, until my mother had brought it up again. It wasn’t significant enough to remember.

Still living just across the street, Jason taught me how to blow bubblegum bubbles and how to tie my shoes. I would sometimes wonder why it was strange to be around him, and why he hadn’t been inside my house in so long. After we moved away, I didn’t see him again until he joined the military. I gave him a hug when he left for basic training and I didn’t know why it was awkward. I assumed it had to do with me being a preteen at that time, which I understood was supposed to come with awkwardness around boys, even if this one was nearly ten years older than me.

I didn’t remember any of this again until I was sixteen. For eleven years, I’d believed I’d lived a life where nothing really bad had ever happened to me. I had a dad with a really good job who could afford to send me to theatre camp and let me take dance lessons and play the French horn. My family was stereotypical 1950 s ideal nuclear family: two married heterosexual parents, a girl, a boy, and a dog. I had good friends—the kinds of friends who didn’t do drugs or drink alcohol. I did exceptionally well in school, and I eventually graduated in the top 10% of my high school class. The most I’d ever dealt with were a couple of bullying incidences because I was a nerd, an artist, and a little awkward. But I wasn’t debilitated by that because I knew that I

was smart and attractive and that my parents would love me no matter what. I knew that one day I would be more successful and happy with my life than those kids. Even after my discovery of what had happened, it took a few years for it to settle in that this abuse had actually happened to me. I made it through my childhood without “victim” being a label I’d attached to myself. I was so incredibly lucky.

### **My solution**

Everything could have turned out much more horribly if my mother hadn’t believed me, if my family hadn’t confronted the situation, or if I hadn’t told them about it in the first place. If I had tried to tell her about it much later, maybe I’d have been able to salvage the situation by noticing my mother’s hyper-alertness sooner and finding the right words to tell her that nothing had really happened. I can’t imagine how my life would have been if my parents hadn’t believed me. And I’m incredibly lucky that one of those parents was my pediatrician father who knew what our options were to help me.

That’s why it’s imperative that if a child approaches an adult about abuse that they are believed. That doesn’t mean arrest and condemn the alleged abuser on the spot, but it does mean to ask questions about what the child means by what he or she says, to explain how he or she feels about the situation, and to confront the person responsible, if necessary or appropriate.

Children are not born knowing right from wrong. They have to be taught which behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate. Some children don’t even know or understand they were abused until years later. Some children don’t say anything because they are told not to. They trust adults implicitly. They are taught to obey adults, which they should: “don’t touch the hot stove,” “hold my hand while we cross the street,” “use gentle touch when petting the dog.” So CSA is a way of taking advantage of a child’s trust in the abuser, the adult in charge (or in cases such as my own,

the teenager in charge)—the trust to keep the child safe and what appropriate play is. Children have no choice but to believe each of us as adults. How do they know the difference between a trustworthy adult and a non-trustworthy adult? Unfortunately, child abusers don't wear an identifying uniform of the dark trench coat, the shady hat, and an evil grin. They look like you and me.

We have to teach children that they are in charge of their own bodies. They should know the proper names for their own body parts, and for those of the opposite sex. They must be allowed to say no to unwanted touch, even from adults and family members (Prevent Child Abuse America). Children must know that they are loved and trusted. They must know which adults they can safely tell if someone is abusing them and that children will *never* be in trouble if they do report abuse to an adult. Most importantly, the adult must trust the child every time (Prevent Child Abuse America).

Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA or PCA) advocates for ways to keep abuse from happening in the first place. PCA also provides parenting education for new parents to teach good disciplinary techniques that don't involve corporal punishment. They also teach parents how to talk to children about their bodies so they know how to describe when someone has been touching them inappropriately, and further how to explain to children what is and isn't appropriate (Prevent Child Abuse America).

PCA was the organization for which I collected donations following the performance of *How I Learned to Drive*. I first became acquainted with the organization through my sorority, Kappa Delta. The national president of PCAA visited our Shamrock 'N Bowl event which was our chapter's philanthropy event to benefit them. He spoke to my sisters before the event and it meant so much to me that there was a whole national organization dedicated to keeping child

abuse of all kinds from happening to other children. I spoke with him personally to ask him what they were doing about promoting comprehensive sex education in public schools. He assured me it was one of the things they promoted.

Most of what PCA does is provide information and parenting classes. They have tip sheets, facts, and suggestions. They list ways to recognize the signs of abuse, and what an adult can do to be there for children. They provide a list of ways to keep kids safe during playtime. They even have a special holiday edition during the winter (Prevent Child Abuse America). They promote awareness for the issue too. This spring, Ball State's chapter of Kappa Delta with Prevent Child Abuse Delaware County (PCADC) sold hundreds of pinwheels to spread awareness, calling them the Pinwheels of Prevention. The pinwheels, with an explanatory sign, can be seen outside homes and businesses all over Muncie, Indiana, and it is a beautiful sight to see.

While the PCAA president had promised me they would work on better sex education, the information I find on their website suggests that my interpretation of comprehensive sex education in schools is not a focus. PCAA focuses on "rigorously evaluating and strengthening existing child sexual abuse prevention programs" (Prevent Child Abuse America). I absolutely agree with their reasoning, and with the other things that they list as goals for preventing CSA, but I think that another solution to add—that is not outlined in this specific way by PCAA anywhere that I can find—would be to use comprehensive sex education in schools to teach children, ingrain in them, appropriate and responsible sexual behavior.

My public school gave me abstinence only education: biological explanation of the body, teach girls how to avoid getting raped, teach everyone that they have the right to say no to sex, an in-depth study of the varieties of STDs (now renamed STIs), and a brief outline of

contraception options without an explanation of their benefits nor how to use them properly. We also never discussed appropriate sexual behavior. I think that if we teach children what is appropriate and inappropriate—e.g. touching children sexually is always inappropriate—some, perhaps many, CSA cases could be prevented. In my opinion, protecting at least one child from experiencing inappropriate sexual contact is worth the effort. I would also propose that age-appropriate sexual issues should be discussed from a young age openly. We shouldn't be ashamed to talk about these issues with children. Teaching them about their rights to their bodies, and in turn the rights of others to their own bodies, is teaching them appropriate sexual behavior for life. As children age, the topic will be comfortable because discussion of these issues will be a normal school activity. They can graduate to learning about appropriate ways to initiate intimacy (age-appropriate), that they have the right to say no, and that two-party consent to intimacy is desirable.

If Jason had had *better* sex education, maybe if he'd been told outright that touching children to examine body parts that he didn't understand was NOT okay, my incident could have been prevented. People discount the importance of saying the things that seem obvious. It's not obvious, or we wouldn't have this problem.



## The Directing Journal

### Pre Auditions

I first read this script for my Aesthetics 2 class in the Spring of 2010 during my freshman year. It was instantly my favorite play of the semester. Not only had I actually gotten through the whole play *before* the first class discussion of the play, but I had actually begun to reread it...until I realized I should probably actually finish my other schoolwork. I found Paula Vogel's play incredibly disarming, and was deeply moved by the language, the story, and the characters. I could see the story as I read the play, and it touched me on a level that no other play had until that point.

It scared me.

I was most afraid to go to the discussion that day. I didn't want to talk about it. I was afraid of crying. I was afraid that I would end up yelling at the class. I was afraid of opening up a part of myself that I wasn't quite ready to share, and that was frankly still new to me.

Sex for our culture is a symbol of loss of innocence and entering the adult world. When we start talking about children and sex, it's like a violation of our most basic cultural ideals. Children are innocent: they shouldn't be having sex, they shouldn't think about it, they shouldn't even know it exists. We shield them from the truth of how they came into being because we love them. But by denying our children the right to the knowledge, they lose the ability to defend themselves against the very thing we fear. We take away their chance of choosing to say "No," we reduce their chance of telling us about unwelcome sexual experiences, and in fact endanger them much more.

However, there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of introducing children to the topic of sex. My own parents took a Montessori approach: if I asked, they answered honestly.

They did not elaborate unless I asked for more information. I knew the proper anatomical names for sex organs and all the parts of my body. Perhaps because it was the way in which I was brought up and because of my experiences, I find my parents' way to be the more successful and more appropriate method of explaining sex to children. Possibly some of the most inappropriate ways are depicted in this play.

Lil Bit grows up in a highly sexualized family. Family members are nick-named for their sex organs, sex is discussed loudly at the dinner table and in the kitchen, her own grandfather insists that a college education is unnecessary for her because "all the credentials she needs [are] on her chest" (Vogel 14). Part of this is due to the highly sexualized culture of the 1960's in the U.S. Part may be Vogel's way of juxtaposing our behaviors and beliefs regarding sex: we discuss sex in front of our children, but we don't want to explain it to them. The first two "On Men, Sex, and Women" Scenes are two of my favorite. In the first they're talking about enjoying sex, in the second we see two approaches to explaining the concept to the teenage Lil Bit. Grandma is horrified to even discuss the topic with her young granddaughter and insists that sex is a horrible and painful thing and attempts to frighten Lil Bit into never wanting to participate in the act, "especially if you do it before marriage!" she exclaims (Vogel 30). Mother, on the other hand, found that this had not worked for her in her own teenage years and had resulted in Lil Bit. Mother answers Lil Bit's question about losing her virginity honestly. Mother's candidness upsets Grandma and results in an argument between the two adults about whose fault it was that Mother became pregnant: Grandma's for not explaining "the facts of life" to her daughter or Mother's for not keeping her skirt down (Vogel 31).

Throughout this play, Uncle Peck says over and over again, "I'm not gonna do anything you don't want to do" (Vogel 11), "Nothing is going to happen between us until you want it to"

(Vogel 23), “I know you’re not going to do anything you don’t feel like doing” (Vogel 43). He *supposedly* leaves the choice to Lil Bit. Lil Bit’s mother even tells Lil Bit, “I hold you responsible” (Vogel 56), the same vilification Lil Bit’s grandmother gave to her daughter when she found out she was pregnant with Lil Bit (Vogel 31). How is it we give children so much of the responsibility, yet none of the information?

Fast forward to spring 2013, the semester I was originally supposed to graduate from college. I still don’t know what to do for my thesis, and I decide—in a moment of probable insanity—that I should do a long research paper on the etymology of words in one Shakespeare play. I never decided on a particular play, since I thankfully scrapped the idea before I got that far. What caused me to scrap the idea was a poster board at the “Scramble Light” in the center of Ball State’s campus. The poster was devoted to information on child sexual abuse, and a couple of young women were handing out blue ribbons. It made me so happy that there were people talking about the issue. At the time, I was also working on Eve Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues*, a play whose central focus is to talk about those sexual things that make us uncomfortable. Not to mention, my sorority’s philanthropy event benefitting Prevent Child Abuse America and Prevent Child Abuse Delaware County was a current event as well.

On that day, I came into work at the Honors House and immediately made myself the soonest possible appointment with Dr. Emert to change my thesis topic.

This play had still been on my radar. For my last general audition as a performance major, I had done a lot of analyzing of *How I Learned to Drive* because that was where I had gotten my monologue. While that had been back in fall 2010, I had held onto the library’s copy of the script. I would flick through it occasionally. I did return it when I ran out of renewals a

year later (this extended checkout period is a perk of being an honors student at Ball State). That story that ran through my mind during my first read nagged at me, begging to be told.

I spent the fall of 2013 reanalyzing the play, now with the idea of directing it. As a 5th year senior with two semesters of directing classes under my belt, I did what I had done as a sophomore trying to choose the right monologue. With a new intent, I found through-lines and themes that I hadn't noticed before. I also found that I appreciated the play dramaturgically and literarily much more than I ever had.

The question of who is responsible when a child is abused came to the forefront. This is an interpretation, and by no means the only one. A director may approach a script in a number of ways, with no necessarily right or wrong way. A few techniques I used were dividing the play into scenes, a new one beginning whenever the "Voice" cuts in (with very few exceptions); finding the commonly used words and phrases in each of the scenes; and tracking Lil Bit's age and the year in which each scene takes place, which led me to notice that the overall gradual regression in age for Lil Bit as the play proceeds. These techniques helped me find when a phrase was recycled in a much later scene, telling me that the phrase is likely important to the story. Further, these connections I was making led me to my focus on the exploration of responsibility in the context of child abuse.

Plays require a central idea to tie the story together. The director's job is to decide what that is. There are probably a dozen other central ideas I could have chosen—any of the feminist objectives, the driving metaphor, the cycle of abuse, etc. Any of these could have worked very well, but responsibility was the one that I was interested in sharing with my audience.

There were a few problems I had to solve when going into this play, the biggest one being the Greek Chorus. While it definitely made finding actors more convenient—needing only

five instead of about a dozen actors—I had to justify why we only needed three actors to play ten roles. I define these as Grandfather, Waiter, Jerome, Greg, Bartender, Mother, Aunt Mary, Sally, Grandmother, Second High School Girl, and 11-year-old Lil Bit; which excludes any time a Greek Chorus member speaks without a definitive character and the "Voice" that interjects into the scenes.

To me, the Greek Chorus functions as representative of the audience. Statistically, the majority of my audience are unlikely to have undergone sexual abuse in childhood. The Greek Chorus are the only characters who are not directly involved in the abuse. I hope the audience can see themselves in these characters and realize the relationship they have with victims of child abuse even if they've never directly experienced it. It is therefore even more jarring when Teenage Greek Chorus comes in as 11-year-old Lil Bit for the penultimate scene. This girl who should have been one of the audience, originally not touched by the abuse, becomes the victim. This is possibly too poetic to be noticed in that way by the audience, but it is significant that Vogel suggests the actor playing the Teenage Greek Chorus leave the stage for good after this scene (6). That feeling of, "It wouldn't happen to me," goes away in that scene. Any of our children could become the next victims of abuse.

There's also the issue of getting the rights to perform the play and finding a venue that will allow the performance and an audience at a time all of the actors can be there and that I can watch it. There's the issue of finding the props, requesting rights for certain music selections to be played, actually making the musical selections heard, the sound effects, the Voice, projections, a set, costumes, and then there's the actors themselves.

## Auditions & The Cast

First a note: if I were to attempt to give this account entirely chronologically, it would be entirely convoluted. Instead, I will recount my first solo casting journey by roles in the production.

The first person I cast was Lil Bit. I wanted Kelly Smith in the part since I made up my mind to do the show back in Spring 2013, when we did *The Vagina Monologues* together. Her approach to the performance was unflinching, and she looked both old enough and young enough for the part. I was very lucky that Kelly turned out to be available for the show in the semester I would bring it to life. After Kelly, however, casting became much more challenging. I did not believe that it would be so difficult to build and keep a cast for this play. I knew a big problem would arise out of the fact that most theatre students are involved in departmental shows during the semester. So, to make up for that, I made the auditions as pain-free as could possibly think of: no prepared monologues, three dates and times to choose from, no expectation of any kind of preparation for the audition. I figured that would bring in a few extra people.

I was wrong. No one showed up for my first two audition times, despite a strong positive response from Dr. O'Hara's Aesthetics class. Possibly, they were only interested in the lead roles (neither of which were available at this point) and when they realized I was only looking for a Greek Chorus, lost interest. At my third audition, I had one male and one female actor at first, and another male and female actor came at later times.

Casting is a subjective and objective process. I have experience in casting for films for the TCOM department and also with selecting musicians for ensembles and it comes down to who can do what you need. Sometimes, you can take anyone and they will get the job done and

done well, so you just have to choose. Other times, someone clearly has what you need and that's whom you go with.

When selecting performers, it is important to make sure the performers can take direction, which means when I suggest an alteration in their performance, they will make the adjustment, or at least try. This goes for both musicians and actors.

Both of the actors who came to the beginning of the third audition tried, but only the female actor was successful. The male actor who came in later, Evan Cullinan, was more successful than the first, so I offered him the part of Male Greek Chorus.

I offered the female Greek Chorus roles to Melanie Balster, who was the female actor who came in later, and the first female actor. I hadn't decided which of the parts they would play and I wanted to hear the ladies together and decide which combination worked better. Unfortunately, this first female actor decided she would not be able to commit to the show. So I needed to have another audition.

I was lucky again and I was able to listen to Claire Stelter with Melanie following a meeting we had together. I decided later that Melanie worked better as Teenage Greek Chorus and Claire would be better as Female Greek Chorus. This decision was questionable because Claire's girlish speaking voice and slender frame are much closer to that of a teenager than Melanie's more womanly voice and body. I justified this with Male Greek Chorus's line regarding Grandmother (Teenage Greek Chorus), "Your sisters were too...scrawny," () indicating that Grandma should not be scrawny.

In the meantime, I took a recommendation from Dr. O'Hara that one of the freshmen who had been in his production of Major Barbara could play the part of Uncle Peck. The student agreed to do it enthusiastically, and I have no doubt that he would have been quite good.

Unfortunately, the student realized that he would be much too busy to both be in my play and do his practicum for another production which would require him at several dress rehearsals and performances right in the middle of my rehearsal process.

As I went into our first read-through, I still didn't have an Uncle Peck. It was just awful. I desperately asked my actors to make Facebook posts about the possibility of participating, talking to friends, and generally advertising the opening in the cast. One of my friends from choir contacted me to express interest, so I invited him to the read-through as his audition. I could actually see Aaron in the part. He was very friendly, very caring and loyal, gentlemanly, attractive. I needed someone who looked trustworthy and gave a general feeling of ease. He was perfect. The hitch was, he was not an actor. Unfortunately, there were no actual actors available. So I had to count on him simply being right for the part, if he *were* an actor.

### **The read-through**

There were several issues with our read-through. We were pressed for time because Kelly (Lil Bit) had a sorority meeting at 9:30 and we weren't able to schedule the start of the read-through until 8:05, due to a fraternity meeting (which Claire, Melanie, and I needed to attend) that ran until 8:00.

I introduced the cast to each other. I wanted to do some sort of getting-to-know-you exercise that would be appropriate for the play, but all my ideas seemed a little heavy for our first meeting and we were pressed for time. I did have us all introduce our names, year, major, and role—the usual first-day-of-anything-in-college routine. Kelly was a little late, but we were able to get started by 8:15. The second issue was the fire alarm going off in the library where we were having our read-through at around 8:45. We moved across the street to The Atrium to finish the read-through, which led to another issue: we were basically doing the reading in public. This



was particularly distracting for Aaron because he happened to know several people in the cafeteria. Aaron was also reading most of the play for the first time; I had only e-mailed him the script earlier that day, and he is a full-time college student.

Kelly left about half-way through, and I had to read Lil Bit's part. It made it difficult to concentrate on what the actors were doing. I would either get distracted by listening to them and forget to read Lil Bit's line, or I would be too busy trying to give them a Lil Bit to work with to think about what they were doing. Honestly, I wasn't always sure exactly what to focus on in the read-through anyway because it was my first time doing one as the director of a full-length play.

At the end of rehearsal, I double-checked Aaron's availability for the performance and asked if he was willing to play the part. I was thrilled and relieved when he agreed to do it

## **The rehearsals**

### **Rehearsal 1:**

Our first rehearsal wasn't for another week. Partially, this was due to the fact that I hadn't yet gotten Kelly and Aaron's weekly schedule. After sending a reminder, I got it from them. Mostly, I just care when their last class of the day ends and if they have weekend commitments. My goal is to never ask them to cancel something for one of our rehearsals since they're all doing this on a volunteer basis.

I had everyone come to the first rehearsal. We did Scene 2 and the first half of Scene 3. I wanted everyone to feel really a part of the show and the rehearsal process. I felt a little nervous at the beginning. I don't know why. I didn't like the furniture I had to work with either. All irrelevant things to the task at hand.

So we started at the top of Scene 2. I hadn't quite decided where I wanted the actors to start before the scene. I was pretty sure they'd start sitting in the audience—we'll be performing

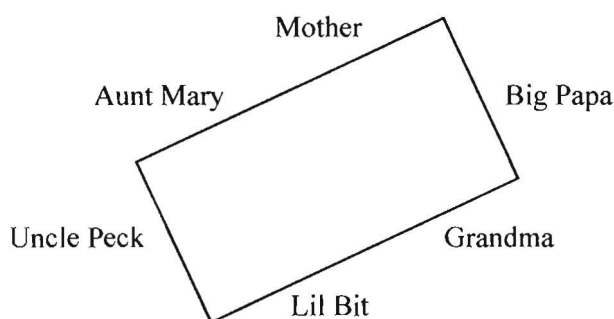
in a classroom and I don't think I'll have wings—but I wasn't sure where exactly they'd be coming from. While I was getting over that, Claire and Melanie started having a conversation, and Aaron offered a suggestion, and I was quickly overwhelmed. I had to get control back.

So I made a decision and started telling people where to sit and where everything was on the stage. I didn't really feel like anyone was listening, but I just kept going in a loud voice until I was done. I don't know if that was the best approach, but I didn't think I would be good to lecture them on paying attention in the first rehearsal. It reminded me of when I was the student assistant to my high school choir director in my senior year of high school. I knew it wasn't personal, but now I had something real I needed to accomplish that I wanted done, rather than a simple matter of, if you don't want to pay attention, it's your grade.

We eventually got to actually saying the words and that helped with the chatter. The next big task was getting the actors to say, “for Blue Balls” and “Just a Little Bit” at the same time. Since all of them have choral experience, I told them to watch the actor who was speaking for the breath to start together. It worked only somewhat. I'm hoping that with practice it'll improve.

**Figure 1**

*Upstage*



*Downstage*

I put the actors around the table in a specific way that I hadn't planned on (see **Figure 1**). I put Big Papa at the head of the table, upstage left, and Uncle Peck at the opposite head, down-right. The men must sit at the head of the table. I wanted Uncle Peck and Lil Bit closer to the audience. I like the idea of Lil Bit turning around to address the audience and facing upstage

when she's talking to her family. Placing Uncle Peck and Lil Bit downstage and closer to center will also make it easier for the audience to feel like the two can have a conversation without the rest of the table noticing, and in a place where the audience can hear and see them well. This leaves three more people to place at the table. Grandma and Aunt Mary ought to sit next to their husbands, and Mary and Lucy need to sit in close proximity so that Claire can change from one to another quickly. These qualifications mean that Grandma should take the seat next to Lil Bit, Mary the one on the other side of Peck, and Lucy the one on the other side of Big Papa.

I'm still not sure when I want Claire to move over and become Aunt Mary. For now I told her to feel it out.

Overall, not the greatest first rehearsal we could have had, but considering it was my first as a director (excluding directing class), I'm not entirely worried about it. Kelly did privately tell me not to be so nice. That I can and should take control. It was good to know how I appeared to the actors, especially since it was differently than I thought. Hopefully, I can exude more confidence next time.

## **Rehearsal 2: 3/25**

Today's rehearsal was held in a classroom in the Honors House. We worked on Scene 1 the whole time and didn't get around to the end of Scene 3, as I had planned. The biggest problem was that Aaron had a hard time not looking at Kelly, which he wasn't supposed to be doing. We tried moving the seats so that they would face one another. It was an improvement. Aaron also felt creepy, he said. So we had to have a conversation about how Peck doesn't feel creepy at all. I told him to think of it more like Lil Bit is Peck's girlfriend than his niece. This seemed to help somewhat. We will have to work on Peck's action of making circles with his

thumbs in the air in front of him. Aaron claims to be a “leg guy” more than a “boob guy” so he doesn’t find Peck’s interest in Lil Bit’s boobs easy to relate to. This will be a long process.

Kelly and I spent a little time talking about Lil Bit’s reasons for going along with the sexual contact. How she feels about it, when it’s comfortable, when she likes it, when she doesn’t. It’s up to her for the most part. My biggest fear is to project too much of how I felt when I was a victim onto the way she plays it. Her experience with some emotional/psychological IPV will definitely help her with accessing the right tools: being torn, wanting affirmation from the abuser, enjoying the attention, and knowing that it’s completely wrong. She’s making different choices than I would, but I actually really like them, and it’s still telling the story I want to tell, I think.

I could get used to being the director.

### **Rehearsal 3: 3/28**

This was a very challenging rehearsal. Melanie was the only person here for the first 20 minutes. As she has no monologues, there was nothing we could get done. We moved the tables out of the way, and chatted about where Claire could be. Kelly texted me that she would be late, so I wasn’t so concerned about her, although I didn’t think that she would be as late as she ended up being.

When Kelly arrived, there was still no Claire. I did somehow get a response from her. She told me she was having some sort of stomach problem with her Crohn’s Disease. It was odd because I had just seen her in our choir rehearsal and she had seemed fine then. I asked her if she could just come and sit and read her lines. There are no scenes with just Kelly and Melanie either.

Eventually Claire arrived and we were able to get started on Scene 7 (since Evan was there, I thought we may as well use him). We read from the table. I didn't intend that to be their blocking, but I ended up using it because they looked comfortable. The scene requires that they be comfortable in their environment. Sitting at a table helped that work.

Claire was uncomfortable with vocalizing arousal, as is called for in the scene, but that could have been due to her stomach as well. I explained that we're in a safe space, and if she just lets it go, she will feel less foolish.

We moved on to Scene 9, and I started to not feel so well. I became incapacitated by my discomfort and was forced to excuse myself. Even though I told them they could take a break, they ended up using that time to work on the scene. I was so grateful! They told me they ran through Scene 7 twice while I was gone.

After Scene 7, Scene 9 was really easy to go through, and we moved on to the "Walk Down Mammory Lane." I had already talked to Jonathan Becker and Drew Vidal about getting a TA from the combat class to choreograph the moment when Lil Bit retaliates against Jerome when he gropes her. I didn't want Evan to get hurt and I have nearly no experience with stage violence, except a couple slaps in high school musicals. Evan seems sure that he can choreograph it himself, and it is pretty simple, so I think I'll let him do it.

Again, getting Claire to focus was a challenge, but it was better than last time. I had forgotten to let her sit, but she didn't say anything about it. We got through the whole scene before our time was up. I admit that I am blocking as I go, which may be ill-advised. But I'm never sure of exactly what I want until I see the actors do it. I will try to make a more specific plan for next time.

**Rehearsal 4: 3/29**

This was simply a conversation between me and Kelly about Lil Bit. I think it really helped both of us. We talked about some of things I mentioned from Rehearsal 2, how I want her to play Lil Bit Kelly's way, not necessarily my way. But I was grateful that she asked me some questions about my experience with the issue. We also figured some things out about Lil Bit together: Lil Bit is a teacher. We explored what she might teach. Possibly theatre? We looked a lot at scene 8 for that. But then we thought, maybe she's an English teacher—English teachers also teach plays, and we know that she likes Shakespeare (Scene 3) and history (Scene 5).

We compared notes about how old Lil Bit should be in Scenes 7 and 9. I convinced her of 15. For one thing, it assists with Lil Bits general age regression in the play (with her flash forwards to the present intermittently). As we talked, Kelly scribbled certain things down in the back of her script. It's wonderful to feel like someone else is as committed to this production as I am. All in all, it was a very productive hour of figuring out this play and Lil Bit's character.

### **Rehearsal 5: 3/31**

We got started, a little late. I'm beginning to feel like my start times feel more like suggestions than actual expectations. We started at the top of Scene 10. Aaron, despite what he says to the contrary, does not seem to know how a car is put together. I mean, neither do I (which is why I'm having my mechanical engineering major boyfriend explain it to me in detail this weekend when we have a chance to Skype again). Whether he does or not, he is nowhere near as excited about the car he's describing as Uncle Peck needs to be. I told Aaron to go through, and assign a feature of his dream sound system to each feature of the car. We moved on.

At first, Aaron wanted to continue being flirtatious with Lil Bit. I explained that Peck means it when he says that he takes driving seriously and wants Lil Bit to take it seriously too.

Then Aaron was explaining that he has actually taught people to drive before and that he takes it very seriously.

“So, do that!” I said. Suddenly, it became a lot closer to how I wanted the scene to go. Then I needed Lil Bit *not* to be taking it seriously at the top of the scene, and for Peck to have to assert the gravity of the situation. It’s a work in progress, but I think they get it and just need some time to think about it differently.

Later in the scene, Kelly didn’t understand why Lil Bit says, “If I put my hands on the wheel—how do I defend myself?” (34). I explained how Lil Bit is uncomfortable in the car with her uncle because that was where they were the first time she was violated. Suddenly something clicked and Kelly scribbled something else in the back of her script. By the end of our work on the scene, I felt pretty confident that this would be one of our better scenes in the show.

Then Aaron and I worked on Uncle Peck’s monologue. Lo and behold, Aaron’s father is a fisherman and has taken him on several fishing trips. This was fantastic news. The monologue currently sounded pretty static and I needed it to actually be specific and have an arc if he was going to stand on stage talking to the audience and an imaginary boy for that long. So, I had Aaron explain fishing to me for a little bit, and then pointed out how dynamic and interesting he made it when we were just talking. It helped for a little bit when he went back to the text, but it didn’t last very long. So, I pretended to be Cousin Bobby. At first it made Aaron laugh, but then he started getting into it. I left feeling better about the monologue, which I’ve been considering cutting.

It’s difficult to give Aaron direction, not because he refuses to take it, but because he feels like he needs to explain everything or apologize. He does not need to apologize whenever he makes a mistake or whenever I give him a direction. He apologizes even if it’s something I’ve

never told him to do before. I'm not sure how to talk to him about this, but it's definitely something I should try to figure out.

A note on why I've been thinking about cutting the monologue: it completely changes the relationship between Peck and Lil Bit. The monologue shows us that Lil Bit is not the first of his victims and that his victims are not limited to girls. The reason I don't like this is because it takes away from Peck's obsession with women and their breasts, since the gender of his victim doesn't matter. It also doesn't explain why Peck proposes to Lil Bit at the end, nor why it tears him up so much because Lil Bit should be beyond the age he prefers by this point. Perhaps that's how big it was for him that she offered to meet him once a week to talk.

#### **Rehearsal 6: 4/1**

Kelly, Evan, and Aaron were already there when I entered the room. I guess it was my turn to be late today. I was surprised to see Aaron there because he wasn't called until later, which I told him. So he left and came back at his call time 8:45.

Evan sat and watched as Kelly and I worked on some of her monologues. It was worth hitting them early because she found some really important things tonight that would not have been good to practice wrong for so long. For instance, the line "fully tanked" referring to both her car being tanked with gasoline and herself being tanked with whiskey. Paula Vogel never ceases to amaze me.

Then we worked on Evan and Kelly's scene on the bus. I had a very specific plan for this. I think it'll work when we have all the actors to work on transitions. Evan disagreed with me, I think, about how to do this. I let myself become confused. While Evan was well-intentioned, I don't think his suggestion was very helpful to me. I wanted Kelly to bring her own chair over from the table to the "bus" so that the chair could be her seat on the bus, and then for Evan to



grab a chair from upstage to become the seat next to her on the bus. For some reason—probably because I didn't explain well—this was confusing. They did figure it out, and I like it so I'm going to keep it the way I have it.

With that, Aaron came back and I ordered pizza (which was delicious). I had promised to buy them dinner tonight, since it was such a long rehearsal and I had some money to spare in my bank account. Claire came in as well, which was nice because I had told her it was optional, since we weren't going to work on her monologues tonight. We're working on them for a half hour after our choir rehearsals two days a week. But I wanted her to come so she could see when she needed to be ready to come onstage throughout the scene, and also so Aaron, Kelly, and Evan would get used to the interruption in the action. I also wanted to Evan to have Claire to drag off stage and for Claire to experience being dragged off by Evan. I can tell already that they don't seem to like each other very much and it's probably best if they get used to this physicalness now rather than later.

I hope Aaron works on his lines more because that did not go very smoothly. He keeps stumbling over his lines. I know he's nervous and he told me about his bad eye-sight which can't make reading aloud very easy for him, but I'm just worried that it might make him not very keen to practice it. It will be better when he memorizes it and he can live in the text more. Hopefully he'll memorize it quickly.

I also need to work with Kelly on this question thing. Many times, when she asks a question, it doesn't sound like a question...which is not how she is when she's herself. I think I remember Wendy teaching us not to ask questions with a vocal indicator of a question mark, or something along those lines. And I know Kelly is either currently taking that class, or just took that class in the fall. However, there are certain lines where it just doesn't even sound like a

question, and it doesn't read. I said, "Can you make that sound more like a question?" and Kelly did, but I kind of just want her to ask the question like a normal American person (it sounds like a British person asking the question right now), rather than try to incorporate the very valid things she's learning in class. The technique does work in other places in the show, but not here, when Lil Bit says, "Are these floorboards slanted?" (20) in a drunken state.

I did have Claire read the text of her final monologue so Aaron and Evan could practice the scene change—moving the table back to stage left. Then I read The Voice's line for Aaron to set up the car. I should find someone to record those Voice lines. Dr. O'Hara? Or Kelly? Melanie? I'm not sure.

We then began a tricky scene. Aaron asked a good question regarding whether he should mime opening a door to "deposit Lil Bit on the front seat" (22). I hadn't consciously considered it before. I decided, no, it was unnecessary.

We then had to deal with Aaron's discomfort with kissing Kelly during the scene. I told him, "Can you make it easier for the kiss to happen? I feel as though you're playing with her a little too much, and Uncle Peck doesn't want to give Lil Bit an opportunity to change her mind before the kiss actually happens." Aaron then explained that this is the way he normally kisses girls. While it may be more romantic to elongate the "wind-up" to the kiss, it doesn't work in this scene. The next time we tried it, their foreheads kept bumping into each other, again. I noticed Aaron taking sidelong glances at Evan, Kelly's boyfriend. Evan noticed too.

"It's really okay," said Evan. "I don't mind. Just go ahead and kiss her."

"Evan and I don't care," added Kelly. "It's just acting. We both signed up for this."

And Aaron went on, explaining why he was uncomfortable. Oh, the joys of directing non-actors in a play such as this. If I wasn't so determined to tell this story, I'd just give up right now. But, in the end, Aaron finally kissed Kelly.

We then blocked the dish-washing scene, which was great, actually (thankfully). We only had to work on Aaron speaking up more, which wasn't nearly as hard as getting him to kiss the beautiful Kelly Smith.

#### **Rehearsal 7: 4/4**

After last night's rehearsal, I decided it would be important for Aaron to have impressed upon him the importance of getting his lines memorized early. So, instead of doing the character work that Kelly and I did on Monday—which would have been challenging to do in front of the guest we had today anyway—I gave him a lesson in memorizing lines. I was able to prove what a long task it would be, I think. It was a lot of work, but I think he'll get it.

We did talk about how he should not judge the character. Obviously, it's a huge challenge to undertake: portraying a child molester. Especially if you're stuck on that aspect of the character. But I told him to really look over Aunt Mary's monologue about what a good person he is, how likeable and caring Peck is, the difficulties of having been in a gruesome war as WWII, etc. I told Aaron to try to identify with those aspects of Uncle Peck's personality: gentlemanly qualities, friendliness, protectiveness, chivalry. Not just the Playboy reading, or the child abusing, or the drinking. Frankly, it's better to look at those as Peck's weaknesses, rather than his whole character. Peck isn't a monster, I told Aaron. He genuinely cares about and even respects Lil Bit. However, he can't help himself. It doesn't in anyway excuse his behavior, nor does the explanation make Peck a "good person" (which may contradict earlier in the paragraph), but it does mean that Aaron shouldn't completely divorce himself from the character entirely.

“Acting is hard,” Aaron said today. Yes, it is.

### **Rehearsal 8: 4/6**

This was a tough one!

Aaron doesn't seem to be invested

Kelly is frustrated

Ended early, not enough time to do photo shoot scene

No Evan.

Claire distracted, again.

I didn't want to choreograph this one as much, but now actors are static.

### **Rehearsal 9: 4/9**

Previous two rehearsals were cancelled due to illness, my own and actors'—Claire didn't tell me, which was irritating.

This rehearsal was much more productive than the last. Maybe I really needed a break.

Aaron is awkward (touching Kelly—both scenes) He's too concerned with Evan being jealous. Again, Evan doesn't care.

Melanie, driving with her dad worked...but still not excited enough.

Aaron and Kelly get to leave early!

Letters from Uncle Peck is not as complicated as the actors were making it (seriously, it's probably the least complicated thing in this show).

### **Rehearsal 10: 4/10**

This one was pretty easy, actually. Claire just needs to access her inner mother more.

### **Rehearsal 11: 4/12**

Last day on book. Wow, no one knows their lines. Nor was *anyone* on time.

I told Kelly not to worry about it so she could focus on her auditions.

We really hit transitions hard. I'm going to have to map this out.

### **Rehearsal 12: 4/13**

I'm starting to get into a bad mood. I need not to be so negative. My map was REALLY effective. I'm so glad I had my friend Cindy on book for me.

### **Rehearsal 13: 4/15**

I was going to work on the song tonight. Apparently it was Evan's birthday. He had callbacks and ended the day exhausted. I'm going to give it to him. I worked the song with Melanie and Claire.

### **Rehearsal 14: 4/16**

Evan and Kelly were a good hour late tonight. I know it was the last night of auditions and they both had callbacks until 11:00, but we're running out of time and we haven't really had a rehearsal since Sunday. I should have had some rehearsals with just Kelly and Aaron the past couple days to catch up, but I guess I'd really counted on Kelly being called back to everything (She's incredible and I could have seen her in any of the shows they were casting for next season; I saw her audition pieces too and they were really good. However, tonight was her only callback). We got nearly nothing done tonight, but we advanced a little farther. In the show, which is better than absolutely nothing. Kelly and Evan were distracted immensely by the cast lists which came out tonight—which is understandable. They are a big deal after all. Except I really feel that Kelly should have put more focus on the rehearsal. Once she saw the cast lists, I don't think she could go on. Good thing I only had the room until midnight then. I'm just hoping we can get more done tomorrow.

### **Rehearsal 15: 4/17**

I'm grateful that I asked the ladies in my music fraternity to send in excuses for tonight. I was feeling guilty for calling Melanie out of her first ever meeting as recording secretary and Claire's first meeting as an initiated member of the fraternity. I had only called them away from the latter portion of the meeting, which is less of the business and more of the fun part of the meetings. We did get to see some of the fun portion before it was time to go.

We met in AC 312 and finished the show. Anna Marie Graham, my sound designer, arrived after the fraternity meeting had finished to watch the show and start creating cues. This is one thing I am *incredibly* grateful that I didn't have to do myself. I am not naturally adept with the technology and Anna Marie is a Music Media Production major with a minor in Technical Theatre, specifically sound. Live mixing is what she wants to do, and as such, she has plenty of experience with sound design for plays. She will be back on Saturday when we rehearse in the space and hopefully get a full run in.

### **Rehearsal 16: 4/18**

Tonight was the formal dance for the music fraternity. Claire, Melanie, and I are all going. Claire and I both missed our social sorority's formals. Earlier this evening, I was wishing that I could just have told them, sorry but we need to rehearse. And then I remember my promise to work around their schedules and that this will be my own last formal dance I ever get to attend, that I have a date, and so it would be rude not to show up.

Melanie and Claire practice the On Men, Sex, & Women scenes as they curl each other's hair and we wait for Aaron, Kelly, and Evan. Kelly had a paper due at 5:00. At least she calls when she's going to be late, which is far preferable to no notice at all, but I had wanted to get in a full run tonight. Aaron comes in costume. I really appreciate it. I brought the costumes I bought on Wednesday for Melanie and Claire. It's not their whole costume. My mother is sending some

of her sisters' skirts from the 60's (when my aunts were teenagers). I am really hoping they'll fit Claire and Kelly. They should, Kelly and Claire are both very thin, like my aunts were.

We didn't get a full run tonight. It's not even close. In fact, I have to remind everyone where they're moving chairs and the table and where they're supposed to be when not on stage. I told them to write it down. Why do I feel like my high school teachers? I emphasize to everyone that we will be here, tomorrow morning, at 10:00am. Please don't be late. Please.

### **Rehearsal 17: 4/19**

Melanie was supposed to pick me up this morning. She overslept. And no one is on time. I swear I emphasized 10am! There's no way every single person didn't make it. I made rehearsal earlier in the evening so Melanie could get home for Easter dinner, which is very important to her family. I told her when she auditioned she'd be able to go. I will never make such promises again (except maybe I wouldn't have had any actors in the show if I hadn't made these allowances).

Kelly and Evan call. They're coming.

Claire is oblivious ("Rehearsal started at 10?" "You want me to get my costume?"). But she's coming.

Aaron is here now with the chairs. Well, at least we can get those in here. We did nearly nothing all morning.

Melanie was having car problems, but her dad's coming to work on it.

I ran some scenes with the people I had. Luckily there are plenty of scenes without Melanie. Evan and I worked on Claire's monologue and Kelly and Aaron worked on some of their scenes in the hallway. I spent some time in both places. I'm really grateful to Evan for helping Claire while I was in the hallway with Kelly and Aaron. Aaron was spending way more

time stressing out about which lines are right than trying to make a connection with Kelly. I told him that it's more important to try to make the scene happen than to get all the right words out, but it would be really great if he could do that too. I don't really want him making things up on stage, but I'd rather he keep going with the scene than correct himself on every line out loud. I thought I was pretty clear about how many lines he would have to learn. I'm now working on a plan to plant scripts on stage so he can glance over and see his lines.

I do get the actors to try on their costumes. Melanie, Claire, and I took the rehearsal time I'd set aside earlier in the evening on Wednesday to go shopping for costumes at Walmart and Target. We found a couple things that could work, but in the end, I called home for my wonderful mother to send me some of her older sisters' clothes from the time period. I didn't pick specific color schemes—except that everyone was to have some color. I didn't want anyone to be in black & white because I didn't want the black & white to seem significant to the audience when it wasn't. I just wanted the clothes to look somewhat like they came from the 60's.

The men's costumes were so easy that I was never worried about them. I was right. I just told them to wear the slacks that were most "fitted" in style (a word my mother and aunt had mentioned when describing men's trousers of the period). Just not jeans, I told them. If you want to wear black trousers, don't wear a white or black shirt. Have a coat jacket that you can wear when it makes sense. Evan pulled his pants up really high to play Big Papa. Aaron's outfit was perfect. He made his own decisions about when to have the coat on or off. He attempted to explain to me in detail the reasons for these decisions, seeming worried I would reject them. I told him that if I didn't like something he was doing, I would let him know. I wonder if I was



like that as an actor. I may have been. I now feel badly for the directors that had to work with me that way and I swear to myself if I ever act again, which is likely, I will be less anxious.

Three days till the show, and now we have costumes and they look really great. We got through more of the show this afternoon and I'm feeling much better. We won't have Evan tomorrow, but everyone else has said they will be here.

### **Rehearsal 18: 4/20**

Aaron never showed up. He didn't answer phone calls, e-mails, text messages, or Facebook messages from any of us. I am completely freaking out. I have no idea what to do. How am I supposed to get another actor by TUESDAY??? I can't believe he is doing this to me. He could just say, "I'm sorry, I can't do it," which would obviously totally freak me out too, but not as badly as this.

I had said that the rehearsal was optional, but that they were supposed to tell me ahead of time whether they were coming or not. Aaron said, "I'll be there." I know he did. He could have at *least* called and said that he wasn't coming. Melanie, Kelly, Claire, and I sat and waited for a long time before giving up and working on On Men, Sex, and Women scenes. There really aren't that many scenes that Aaron and Evan both aren't in. On the bright side, at least the On, Men, Sex, and Women scenes should be hilarious. Then people might overlook the fact that we don't have an Uncle Peck...

Kelly has a friend who is an Acting major who was working on the scenes with Kelly yesterday and today. She told me he read it very well, and I think I could get away with having a script on stage if the actor wouldn't be buried in it (which Aaron would be), especially with a last-minute new actor. I think the audience would be forgiving. However, if Aaron is going to

show up, well, I don't want him to have put in all of that work for nothing. It was the "optional rehearsal." But why didn't he answer anyone's calls?

At this point, I have e-mailed Dr. O'Hara and the possible stand-in, explaining the situation. I sent the script to the stand-in and thanked him for his willingness and said I would contact him if I did need him, and gave him the time and location of tonight's rehearsal.

### **Rehearsal 19: 4/21**

THANK GOD AARON WAS HERE!! He was working on his lines. Apparently he's done nothing else since Saturday's rehearsal. He apologized for not contacting anyone yesterday and for not responding to our attempts to contact him. I had no choice but to forgive him.

We ran the show. I made them do the transitions correctly and tried not to give comment on the scene. It is so much harder than I thought it would be. While I tried to take notes, I also had to continue reading "The Voice."

We didn't finish until 1:00am. I didn't want to keep them past midnight, but they all seemed willing to stay to the end. Anna Marie was here too.

Did I mention that everyone was on time tonight?

It might actually pull together.

### **Rehearsal 20: 4/22**

I don't know if the time before the performance counts as a rehearsal, but I did have them listen to some of the sound cues they'll hear so they wouldn't be surprised by them (since we *didn't* get a chance to run through them all on that Saturday). I realized that I still needed the cookie jar and some collection tins for PCA. I ran to the Kappa Delta house to borrow a collecting tin. I guess I'd imagined them. Then I run to the SAI office to borrow one of our jars that looks like a cookie jar.

It hadn't worked out with the person I'd originally had collecting props.

I tried to give everyone a pre-show pep talk of sorts. It was a little awkward for some reason. I told them that they had all done a good job, that I was proud of them, that I had confidence in them, and I realized that all of those things were actually true. I mean, I still wasn't sure about Aaron's lines, but aside from that, I wasn't worried about much.

My aunt and uncle loaned me some baskets that worked wonderfully to collect money from audience members. My parents brought me a memory card for the video camera.

Oh, that video camera. I tested it to make sure it worked. I am so grateful that it did. I didn't even think of it until yesterday. I had to borrow one from the library and man it myself.

## **Reflection/Artist Statement**

I could go over every single thing that went wrong. Catalogue it, explain it, and describe the way it could have been fixed by me. Every performance I've ever given as a performer, I've done that in my head: every wrong note, each breath that wasn't deep enough, every misstep, every wrong word in a line. From the director's standpoint, it seems that I could go on forever.

But, overall, it really was pretty good, especially considering it was my first ever attempt to direct a show and that the majority of the actors are not pursuing acting careers and therefore lack the training and possibly confidence of trained actors. I had no stage manager (I dreamt of one so longingly), no costumer, no set designer, no props master, no assistant of any kind, no set designer, no lighting designer. I had no curtain, no real "backstage," my sound technician was on the stage, and my projections never came through. So, all in all, it might be a miracle the show even happened at all.

My audience was much larger than I anticipated. I think there were a good thirty to forty people in the audience. I was astounded by the attendance. Many of my family members came,

as well as many of the cast's. Some sorority sisters, some fraternity sisters, my bosses, my advisor, a couple theatre majors, and some friends of the cast were also there, not to mention two representatives of PCADC. The post-show response was better than I could have hoped.

I became a little anxious without my notes at the beginning of the post-play discussion. My biggest fear was that no one in the audience would want to have the conversation I said I was starting with the play. That the whole theory of this thesis would be wrong. That I would have to be using this "Reflection" portion of the thesis to explain why I *couldn't* start a conversation using this play. And yet, I did.

I did, unintentionally, have a control group in this experiment. I presented on this play to a small audience in the Honors House called the Thesis Expo. I was the first presenter. At the end I asked for questions. I got one from a Kappa Delta sister who was being helpful to me, but the question had more to do with the PCA pinwheels than CSA as a subject. There were no other questions and no comments. To me this says that some sort of creative prelude to the topic can be truly beneficial to having a real conversation about CSA, and possibly other uncomfortable topics.

Despite my clumsy beginning to this discussion, people were willing to raise their hands and give their input. They asked questions about the play and the topic. Afterwards, I collected almost \$150 for Prevent Child Abuse—more than I had hoped.

Directing a play about CSA and discussing my personal history with it was an arduous task. It took a lot of inner strength, and a massive amount of research. It meant reminding my parents of the horror they had experienced with their young daughter. It meant being incredibly vulnerable with my actors and with each of my audiences. It meant I had to make a lot of meticulous plans and communicate those with several people in a clear way. It meant that I was

responsible for realizing an entire story on a stage in way that the audience could follow it. Only my unique experience at Ball State could have prepared me for this.

This thesis is the culmination of my five years at Ball State. I learned how to do the things I needed to do for this project because of the classes I took and the organizations I joined. I realize now that I could never have done this show in this way if I had not met the people who helped me, had not had their support. All three of my female actors are sorority or fraternity sisters. I met Aaron in choir, and Evan probably would not have tried out if it had not been for Kelly. My sound designer is a sister from my fraternity. The arranger I used for the song is a composer I met through choir. The level of communication necessary for this show to happen can only be compared to my immersive learning experience with The Golden Age of Jazz project last fall.

There is a phrase I learned from my choir director at Ball State, Dr. Andrew Crow: “risk spectacular failure.” He tells his choirs before most concerts that we must “risk spectacular failure” if we want to create beautiful music. The thing with the arts is that it generally is not a literal life or death situation. Failure does not mean a patient dies or a plane crashes, but success can mean changing lives or bringing some semblance of temporary peace and happiness or a lifetime of critical thought. I think Paula Vogel’s play gave my audience another perspective on how they can make a difference for victims or potential victims of CSA. If I did that, then the risk I took did not fail.

### Works Cited

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## Appendices

Appendix A: Rehearsal Calendar

Appendix B: Character-Scene Breakdown

Appendix C: “I Second That Emotion” (arrangement by Elysia Arntzen)

Appendix D: Outline for the Speech at the Expo

Appendix E: The Director’s Copy of the Play by Paula Vogel

Appendix F: *How I Learned to Drive* Poster

Appendix G: Performance Program

Appendix H: DVD of Performance

# MAR/APR 2014

REHEARSAL CALENDAR **How I Learned to Drive**

SUBJECT  
TO  
CHANGE

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY/ FRIDAY	SATURDAY
WEEK 1	23	24	25 8:30-9:45 SC Ballroom Scenes 2 & 3 pp. 12-15	26	27/28 4:00-5:15 BA 117 Scenes 1 & 3 pp. 10-12 & 15-16	29 2:00-5:00 BL 311/312 Scenes 7 & 11 pp. 25-28 & 35-39
	notes		ALL		Lil Bit & Peck	All except Peck
WEEK 2	30 DAY OFF ☺	31 6:30-7:30 BL 410	1 8:00-11:00 BL 409 Scenes 10 & 6 pp. 31-35 & 24-25	2 7:00-11:00 BB 109 Intro & Scenes 4, 8, 5, & 5.5 pp. 16-23 & 28-29	3/4 4:00-6:00 BA 117	5 DAY OFF ☺
	notes	Lil Bit	Lil Bit & Peck	All except TGC	Peck	
WEEK 3	6 3:00-5:30 BL 410 Scenes 16 pp. 49-55	7 CANCELLED!	8 CANCELLED!	9 8:00-11:00 AC 314 Scenes 15, 16, & 12 pp. 48-55 & 39-44	10/11 4:30-5:30 BL 409 Scene 17 pp. 55-56	12 12:30-3:30 TC 121 Clean-up & Epilogue pp. TBA & 58-59
	notes Lil Bit, Peck, FGC, & MGC			ALL	Lil Bit & Mother	ALL
WEEK 4	13 1:00-5:30 TC 121 Stumble Through	14 CANCELLED!	15 10:45-midnight MIB Doo-Wop p. 31	16 6:30-8:30   10:30- midnight AC 302   BL ER 1 Run 2 <sup>nd</sup> Half pp. 9-30	17/18 Thurs. 8:30-11:00 AC 312 Fri. 4:00-7:30 TC 121 Full run	19 10:00am-5:00pm TC 121 Tech/Dress
	notes ALL (OFF BOOK!!)		All Greek Chorus	ALL	ALL	ALL
WEEK 5	20 Easter Optional: 8:00-10:30 BL 409 Work Scenes	21 **9:30-midnight AC 314/BL 409 FULL RUN We are working around the Beethoven rehearsal.	22 5:30 Call (brush-up transitions) 7:30 Performance TC 121	23 THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK!	24/25	26
	notes ALL	ALL	ALL			





## How I Learned to Drive

### Character-Scene Breakdown

	The Intro-duction	Typical Drive w/ Peck	The Family	A Family Dinner	Driving Alone	Driver's License	Drunk	Fishing w/ Bobby	MSW 1	The Bus	MSW 2
	Intro	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4	Scene 5	Scene 5.5	Scene 6	Scene 7	Scene 8	Scene 9
Character	p. 9	pp. 10-12	pp. 12-13	pp. 13-16	pp. 16-17	pp. 17-22	pp. 22-23	pp. 24-25	pp. 25-28	pp. 28-29	pp. 29-31
Lil Bit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Peck		X	X	X		X	X	X			
FGC			Mother	Mom/Mary		Mother			Mother		Mother
MGC			X	Big Papa		Waiter			Big Papa	Young Man	Big Papa
TGC			X	Grandma				Intro	Grandma		Grandma

	Doo-Wop	Driving Lesson	Mammary Lane	The Photo Shoot	Aunt Mary's	Christma	Letters from Peck	The Break-Up	An Argument	The First Time	
	Transition	Scene 10	Scene 11	Scene 12	Scene 13	Scene 14	Scene 15	Scene 16	Scene 17	Scene 18	Epilogue
Character	p. 31	pp. 31-35	pp. 35-39	pp. 40-45	pp. 44-45	pp. 45-48	pp. 48-49	pp. 49-55	pp. 55-56	pp. 56-58	pp. 58-59
Lil Bit		X	X	X		X		X	X	(X)	X
Peck		X	(NS)	X		X		X		X	(NS)
FGC	X		HS Girl		Aunt Mary		X	Aunt Mary	Mother		Mother
MGC	X		Jerome/Greg		Intro	Intro	X	X(Bartender)			Big Papa
TGC	X		Sally				X			Lil Bit	[Lil Bit]

\*NS or ( ) = Non-Speaking

\*[ ] = Off-stage